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Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5919th meeting

Monday, 23 June 2008, 6.10 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Khalilzad	(United States of America)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Letter dated 18 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/407)

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08-39337 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 6.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Letter dated 18 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/407)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Zimbabwe, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in response to a letter dated 18 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium addressed to the President of the Security Council and contained in document S/2008/407.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. I now give the floor to Mr. Pascoe.

Mr. Pascoe: I would like to thank Council members for this opportunity to brief them on the situation in Zimbabwe. Four days before the scheduled presidential run-off election of 27 June, the situation has deteriorated to alarming levels and has reached a new degree of gravity. The withdrawal of Mr. Tsvangirai from the Friday run-off demonstrates this situation very clearly. While we have been working to improve conditions, we also do not believe conditions exist for a "free and fair" run-off election. We strongly discourage the authorities from going ahead with the run-off under these circumstances as that would only increase divisions and produce a discredited result.

In the Secretary-General's view, the situation in Zimbabwe constitutes a major challenge to regional stability in Southern Africa, not only because of its likely direct impact on the region's political and economic security and the possible displacements, but also because it creates a dangerous precedent for the political future of the continent. Since the beginning of the political impasse following the 29 March elections, the Secretary-General has expressed his concern about the process and the politically motivated violence. He has remained closely engaged with all relevant regional and international leaders to assist in a resolution of the crisis.

As a result of his meeting with President Mugabe in Rome during the World Food Summit, in which he persuaded the Government to engage and work with the United Nations, he dispatched Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios to Zimbabwe with the mandate to discuss ways to improve the political climate ahead of the run-off elections.

Assistant Secretary-General Menkerios was granted broad access by the Zimbabwean authorities and met with a wide spectrum of actors and stakeholders in order to gain a balanced understanding of the situation. He met with President Mugabe; with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Labour and Social Welfare; with the Deputy Commander of the army; with the Electoral Commission; with the leaders of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara; with Mr. Simba Makoni who came third in the most recent presidential election; with civil society and church organizations; and with the heads of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and other observer missions as well as with the diplomatic community.

In his meetings with the Government, the Assistant Secretary-General's message was that the

Government has the primary responsibility to ensure the security of all citizens; that conditions for free and fair elections must exist, in particular that the violence and intimidation had to stop and violators brought to justice; that an equal playing field had to be created for both candidates and their parties; and that dialogue was critical to ending the crisis. He also pressed for the resumption of humanitarian activities.

Based on his observations, Mr. Menkerios informed the Secretary-General that conditions did not exist for free and fair elections in Zimbabwe and that no outcome of an election run under these conditions could be considered credible.

The country has experienced a staggering degree of violence, with the opposition claiming that over 80 of its supporters have been killed by supporters of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and thousands displaced from their wards. There is ample evidence that such violence has been perpetrated by a combination of State agencies — army, police, and intelligence — by war veterans and by youth militias. The Government claims that violence has also been perpetrated by MDC activists against ZANU-PF supporters. Evidence suggests that while there has been some retaliatory violence, it has been of a much lesser degree than that of the Government and its supporters.

This widespread campaign of intimidation and threat is antithetical to the very spirit of elections. Instead of openness, free competition and transparency, the current climate is one of fear, hostility and attacks on the physical integrity of Zimbabwean citizens. The violence and the displacements pose an immediate challenge to the credibility of the voting process.

It was hoped that the climate would improve with the arrival of a large number of regional and international observers, as the presence of the observers could have helped deter the violence and increase confidence. As part of its cooperation with regional organizations, the United Nations has provided logistical and technical assistance for SADC observation efforts. As a result of combined efforts, the number of observers significantly increased over those present for the first round, when SADC deployed 120 observers.

The observers were also mandated to stay in-country for a longer period of time after the election. The United Nations provided support for some 300 observers from SADC member States. As of today, 397 SADC observers have been accredited and deployed in Zimbabwe. The expected total number of SADC observers is about 430. The African Union and the Economic Community of West African States have also increased their number of observers dramatically. Initial reports by SADC and Pan-African Parliament observer missions provided first-hand accounts of politically motivated violence.

There has been growing concern that domestic observer groups would not be able to field as many observers as they did for the first round, held on 29 March, due to the restrictive provisions adopted by the authorities. One such domestic group, the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network, suffered great restrictions in the accreditation of its observers. It has only been allowed to deploy 500 domestic observers to cover over 9,000 polling stations. The MDC candidate has little or no access to the Zimbabwean media; he is barred from freely campaigning; and it was reported that campaign buses and vehicles were seized by the State, allegedly for unlawful registration. The party's Secretary-General, Mr. Tendai Biti, remains under arrest, charged with treason. Today we heard reports that the MDC headquarters had been raided and dozens of supporters detained.

In Zimbabwe the distinction between the ruling party, Government and State institutions is blurred. The civil service, the judiciary and in particular security institutions such as the army and the police do not play a neutral role to ensure security and a peaceful atmosphere. The chiefs of security forces in Zimbabwe have on many occasions declared that they would not "allow puppets to take charge" or "salute sell-outs and agents of the West". President Mugabe himself declared that he was "prepared to go to war" if he lost and that the MDC would never be allowed to rule the country. State institutions are partisan, and not neutral effective instruments of citizenship and the rule of law.

Yesterday, opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai announced he was withdrawing from the Friday run-off election, pointing out that condition for credible elections did not exist. He argued that there is evidence of widespread State-sponsored violence, that he had been unable to campaign, that the MDC has lost confidence in the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission since the institution has been staffed with war veterans and youth militia and that the political leadership of ZANU-PF and war veterans have made public

statements openly declaring that they would defy an MDC victory.

The MDC called on SADC, the African Union and the United Nations to intervene urgently to restore the rule of law, peace and conditions for a free and fair election. Mr. Tsvangirai further advised that the MDC would make public its next move on Wednesday, 25 June. In the interim, he has indicated that the MDC remains open to participating in any future elections under conditions which are consistent with SADC norms and principles governing democratic elections.

As I stated earlier, conditions for a free and fair run-off election do not exist at present. It is our view that the election should be postponed for an appropriate period. The Government must ensure that conditions are in place for a credible process to take place.

Given the gravity of the situation, the parties should immediately engage in talks to establish a period during which conditions for free and fair elections can be created. I reiterate the Secretary-General's offer of his good offices in support of such efforts, as appropriate. The United Nations is prepared to work urgently with SADC and the African Union to help resolve this political impasse. The Secretary-General's envoy, Assistant Secretary-General Menkerios, remains in the region to assist.

Africans have made very clear their concerns regarding the situation in Zimbabwe. The voice of African leaders has grown stronger, and the region is mobilizing to solve this challenging crisis. President Mbeki of South Africa, who has been mandated by SADC to mediate the crisis, has declared that the political leadership of Zimbabwe should get together and find a solution to the challenges faced by the country.

SADC Chair and Zambian President Mwanawasa has called for the postponement of elections to allow for the establishment of conditions suitable for free and fair elections in accordance with Zimbabwean law, the SADC principles and the Charter and conventions of the African Union.

Angolan President Dos Santos, the Chair of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, has also urged President Mugabe to observe a spirit of tolerance and respect for differences and to cease all forms of intimidation and political violence.

Furthermore, a group of 40 prominent African former heads of State and other personalities have signed an open letter calling for an end to the current political violence in Zimbabwe, declaring their concern at the reports of intimidation, harassment and violence and saying that it is vital that appropriate conditions be created so that the presidential run-off can be conducted in a peaceful, free and fair manner.

The Secretary-General recognizes the continuing efforts by SADC to facilitate a solution in Zimbabwe and the leading role that South Africa has played in this effort, and he has been encouraging and supporting these. He welcomes the decision by SADC to hold an emergency meeting on Zimbabwe and gives his support to SADC and African Union measures to address this pressing situation.

It is now time to redouble efforts to assist in facilitating the immediate start of a period for establishing conditions necessary for free and fair elections and to help restore security and the rule of law in the country. We believe it is clear that a winner-takes-all approach will not bring peace and stability to the country. All forms of violence, intimidation and obstruction must stop.

I reiterate the Secretary-General's call on both parties to resume talks immediately to seek a peaceful resolution of this crisis for the good of all Zimbabweans. Zimbabwe must have a credible process in place so that the run-off election can produce a legitimate outcome in the eyes of the Zimbabwean people and the world community.

The President: I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing.

There are no other speakers on my list. The Security Council has this concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I invite members to a private meeting to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.